

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

The Gift of Ahavas Hashem

based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל

Reaching 'אהבת ה' is no simple task. The אבן שלמה tells us that Torah and Mitzvos are within a person's reach, however, fear and love of Hashem are beyond us; these levels are a gift from Hashem. In this week's Parsha, the Seforno explains the formula necessary to achieve this gift of 'אהבת ה'.

The Seforno comments on the Pasuk (30:6), which states, "Hashem will remove the interferences of your heart and the heart of your children, to love Hashem your G-d with all your heart and soul, so that you live." The Seforno writes, "When you strive to get close to Hashem, He will remove from your eyes any errors that cloud your intellect from seeing the truth. This will cause you to recognize His goodness which will compel you to love Hashem." We see from the Seforno that reaching the level of loving Hashem is a three step process. The process begins with a person striving to get close to Hashem, then Hashem will allow this person to see His goodness, which will cause a love of Hashem. The idea that striving to get close to Hashem as the prerequisite for loving Hashem, is echoed by the Mesillas Yesharim (Chapter 1) who writes as follows: "However, to merit to this good (דביקות), it is appropriate that a person labors first and exerts effort to acquire it. This means that

they should strive to cling to Hashem by doing the actions that cause this result, which are the Mitzvos."

It is apparent that the critical factor we are required to strive for is to get close to Hashem, and the rest will happen automatically. The Seforno in explaining the preceding Pesukim defines what it means to strive to get close to Hashem. "Regarding one who is doing Teshuva to fulfill Hashem's will, it is not enough to feel spiritually connected. Action is also required. In addition, he stops doing things by rote and routine, and acts with focus and sincerity. He also resolves all of his doubts, and has control over his desires, which is due to him recognizing the value of getting close to Hashem. When a person fulfills these steps he will be considered striving to connect to Hashem."

We may often feel that loving Hashem is a level that is unattainable, as we are at a loss regarding the steps necessary to attain it. However, the Seforno presents to us a clear program to follow to achieve this desired goal. Through striving to cling to Hashem, loving Hashem becomes within our reach.



Why did Priority-1 initiate the 1-Focus Say Nishmas Campaign?

Priority-1 initiated this campaign because we are passionate about helping people strengthen their emunah and develop a strong connection with Hashem. We have noticed a wonderful increase in awareness of Hashem's absolute control over the world during the coronavirus pandemic. We want to ensure that the strides we have made on a communal level continue even after the crisis ends. That is the sole purpose of this campaign.

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Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

The Rabbi of the assisted living facility could not get over the contrast. Mr. Jacobs and Mr. Fried both had to deal with wives who were nothing less than abusive towards them. However, whereas Mr. Jacob's relationship with his wife was in ruins, Mr. Fried's overwhelming love and care for his wife was obvious to all. One day, upon witnessing Mr. Fried's loving response to his wife's public mistreatment, the Rabbi commented, "You're unbelievable! How do you manage to keep it up when others who are treated similarly fall apart?" "Rabbi," Mr. Fried responded, "How can you compare my situation to my friends? While his wife is perfectly healthy, mine suffers from dementia. I know how much she really loves me, and seeing her suffering just arouses my love for her."

Sometimes we come across people who have rebelled against Hashem in the most egregious of ways. We know from the study of Shir HaShirim the unbelievable level of love Hashem has even for them and we wonder, how could it be?

The following pasuk in Shir HaShirim with Chazal's explanation provides us the answer.

Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, For I am sick with love. (Shir 2:5) The Medrash explains these words to mean: Even though I am sick I am beloved to Him.

The above sickness of Klal Yisroel is obviously not referring to a physical sickness, rather it refers to our spiritual state. We see from here that in truth, the actions of any Jew even at his lowest state, are not a true reflection of himself. Rather, they are merely the actions of someone who has temporarily fallen ill, who with caring attention will surely recover. Therefore, of course Hashem's infinite love for him is not diminished.



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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"I feel bad I can't continue to play with you right now Yitzy, but I must go to shul to daven. What's shul and what's daven? Shul is Hashem's house and davening is when we talk directly to Hashem. Isn't that amazing? Your father is going now to an appointment to talk directly to the Creator of the entire world, who is the only one who decides everything that will happen in the world; who will be healthy, who will be safe, who will have money and everything else. Could you imagine? I'm not merely going to talk with a big tzaddik, I'm going to have a most personal conversation with the Creator of Heaven and Earth. Millions of malachim who could each turn over the whole world with their great power, tremble before Him as they merit to say 'Kadosh kadosh kadosh,' sometimes only once in their lives, but I am going to speak to Him right now one on one!"

Yitzy had heard variations of this speech many times since the age of two until today, his fifth birthday. They really made him proud of who he was and so happy to be a frum Jew who has such an unbelievable opportunity to be close to the Creator. It made the concept of Hashem in general so real to him.

What a tragedy it was when that all went out the window on this day, his first time going to shul! What happened? His father took him to shul, and it was clear from the way people were davening and talking in shul that his father didn't really mean what he had always told him!

Davening in shul three times each day is the greatest tool we have to strengthen our ability to actually feel and live the Emunah we know, which is the definition of Bitachon and the foundation of all the mitzvos in the Torah, as the Gemora states (Makos 24a): "Chavakuk came and established them [all 613 mitzvos] on one, "And the righteous, will live with his beliefs."

However, with this greatest of gifts comes the greatest of dangers, for by being callous with it, not only will we not reap its limitless benefits, but it can become a great detriment to our feeling and living the Emunah we know!